

Europe

Balkans

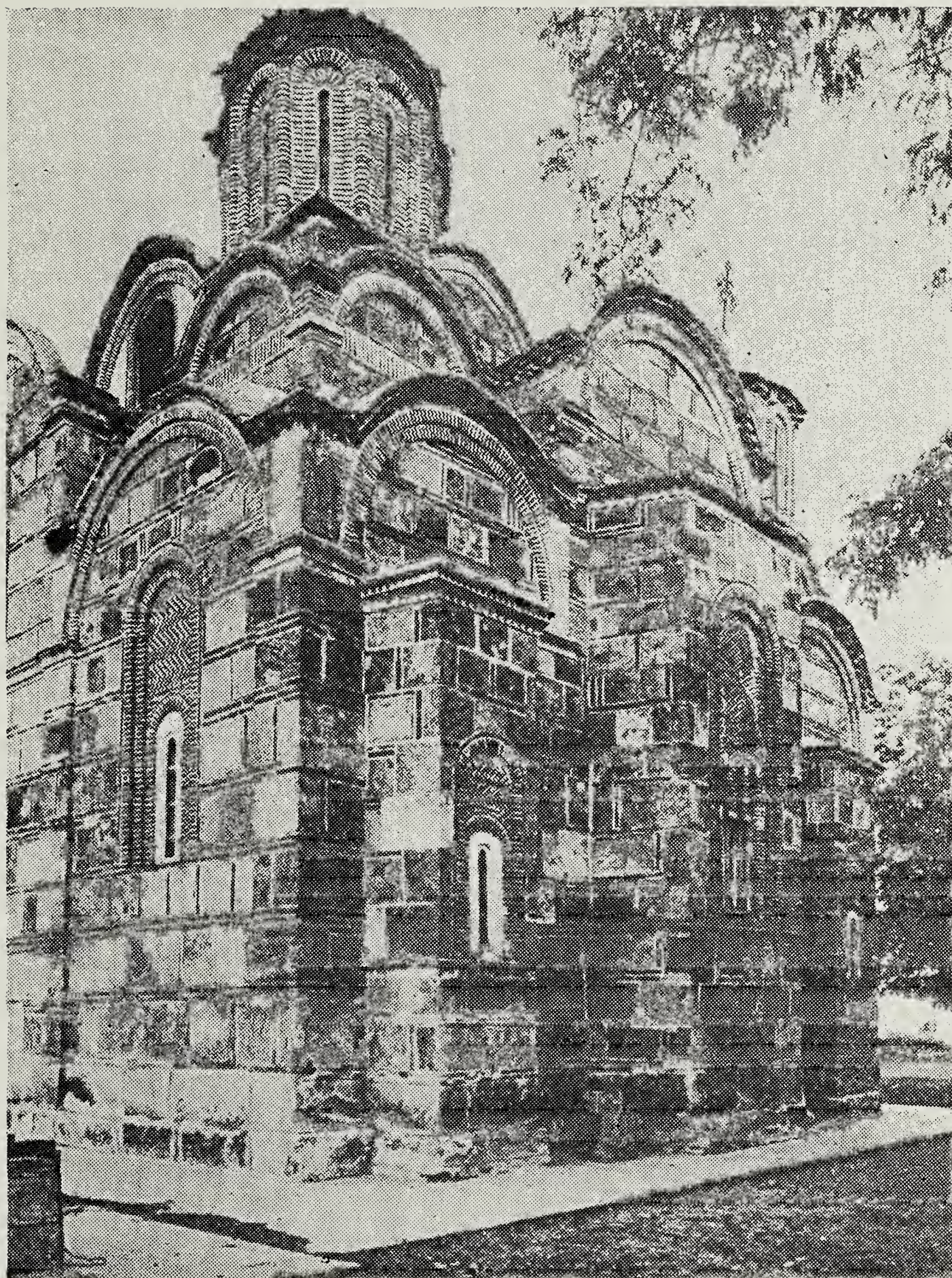
Persecution of Serbian Church in Yugoslavia



Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church, Saint George's columns, erected in 1170 A.D., and desecrated by the enemies of Christendom.



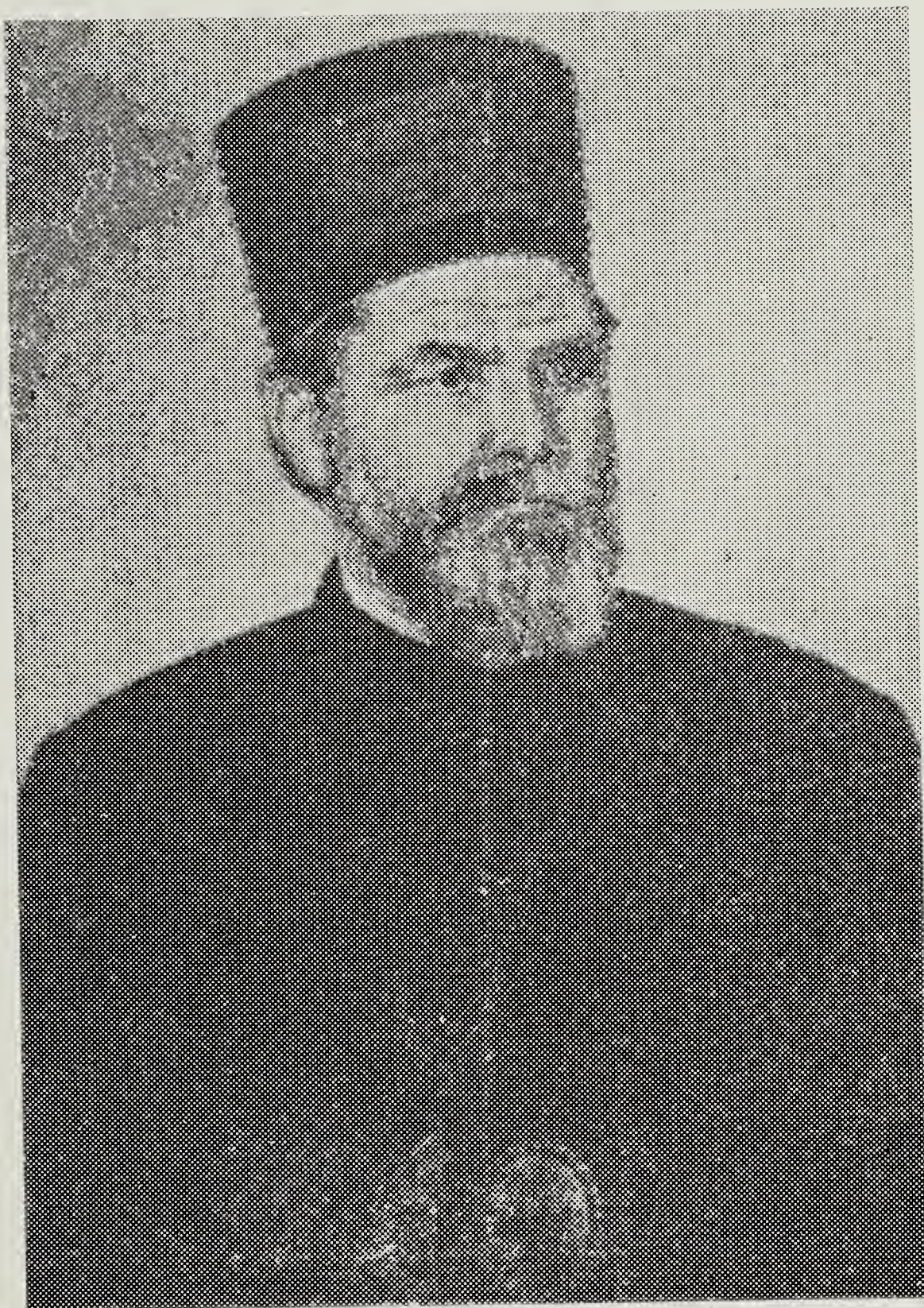
.....And Thy neighbour as thyself.
St. Matthew, Chap. 22, Verse 39.



Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church Gratchanitzza, erected in 1321 A.D.,
on the Field of Kossovo by the Nemanich dynasty.



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His Eminence Metropolitan Arsenius of Montenegro, the vice-president of the Holy Synod — governing body of the Serbian Orthodox Church — latest victim of Communistic persecution.

August 14th, 1954

The Second Assembly
of the World Council of Churches
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Serbian people after settling in the Balkan Peninsula embraced Christianity, preached there in the first century by Saint Paul the Apostle. The first period of Serbian history was a period of Cultural and Church progress. The Serbs built many beautiful churches, monasteries, they opened schools and wrote many books as a witness of a high Serbian Christian civilization. During their history the Serbs were enslaved by the Turks for a period of 500 years under whose yoke were persecuted and killed; their churches and monasteries were burned or looted; their Patriarchs, Bishops, monks and priests were tortured, hanged and killed. Yet in spite of the great sufferings inflicted upon them, the Serbs did not lose hope and by God's help that tragedy was overcome.

During the second World War the Serbian Orthodox Church and her people again were periled and persecuted by Pavelich Croats in the so-called "Independent State of Croatia", created by Hitler. Many books were written about that bloody tragedy of our Church and Nation.

Today the Serbian Orthodox Church is again endangered, undergoing persecution by Tito's communistic regime in Yugoslavia. Great pressure is placed upon the Serbian Orthodox Church in order to replace the Gospel with Atheism and Christ with Communism. Since the Church cannot betray its divine calling she became persecuted: Metropolitans, Bishops, priests and faithful adherents of Christ, are maltreated and arrested. Recently, Tito's regime arrested and sentenced to 11½ years at hard labor, the aged Metropolitan of Montenegro, Arsenije. The charges brought against him were that he defended Orthodox Ecclesiastical rights and teachings and his sympathy toward America. The

enclosed pamphlet sufficiently states the status of our enslaved Church in Yugoslavia.

The Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade was not able to send any delegate to this Ecumenical Church Assembly, the greatest the world has ever known. We presume that His Holiness the Serbian Patriarch was pressured by the communistic government not to send any delegate to this World Assembly of Churches. The undersigned are Bishops of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church representing 9,000,000 members and who were accepted by the World Council of Churches as Accredited Visitors only. We present this plea to the entire delegation in attendance: Archbishops, Bishops, priests, brothers and sisters of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches by beseeching that your voice be raised against communistic-atheism in the world as an enemy of true and real religious freedom and to condemn the arrest and sentencing of His Eminence Metropolitan Arsenije, second-ranking Serbian Orthodox Ecclesiastic in Yugoslavia.

Victory over atheistic-communism is guaranteed only by the unanimous determination of Churches to boldly struggle against Communism. By this action the World Church Assembly will prove to be the True Defender of Christianity and the Gospel. For in the main theme of this Assembly lies the solution of the salvation of the World.

We are invoking God's blessings upon all of You to assist and guide You in Your Christian efforts.

RT. REV. BISHOP DIONISIJE
Bishop of the Serbian Eastern
Orthodox Diocese for the United
States of America and Canada.

RT. REV. BISHOP NIKOLAI
Bishop of Zicha.

AFTER the fall of the ancient Serbian State and the coming of the Turks to the Balkan Peninsula, difficult times befell the Christians of that entire part of Europe. The Turkish authorities particularly persecuted the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, not even during the worst of the Turkish persecutions, was the Church subordinated as it was during the occupation in World War II and the period immediately following. The atrocities committed upon the Serbian people and their Orthodox Church from 1941 to date, are hereto unheard of. Consider the following facts.

THE USTASHI MASSACRES

Yugoslavia, prior to the Second World War, had 7,337,708 Orthodox Christians, with 3,964 churches (not including many chapels) and 237 monasteries. These churches and monasteries were spiritually administered by some 3,200 priests and 581 monastics, supplemented by 292 nuns.

Of this total number of churches, monasteries and priests, 1,135 were located in Pavelich's "Independent State of Croatia". According to the figures published by the Rt. Reverend Bishop Dionisije in his book entitled: *THE PERSECUTION OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN YUGOSLAVIA*, about 400 of the above mentioned churches remained intact with later domination by the Roman Catholic clergy. Most of the Orthodox clergy and bishops of these churches were killed, with the exception of those who succeeded in escaping to Serbia proper or to some foreign land. As an example, in the Diocese of Plashki, in the province of Lika, 137 priests were killed along with their Bishop Sava. Only five (5) priests remained alive after this massacre, which was carried out by the Croatian (fascist) Ustashi, on the order of their central government at Zagreb. In Banja Luka, the Rt. Reverend Bishop Platon was killed as well as most of his priests and monks. In Sarajevo, Metropolitan Petar Zimonich was first tortured and then killed as were most of the clergy of his Diocese. A total of about 700,000 consisting mostly of women and children were tortured and killed via orders of the "Croatian State". Most of them were slaughtered in concentration camps, or burned alive in Orthodox churches. Atrocities such as these were unrecorded from the time of

“Protestant Inquisitions” (e. g. Waldensians, Huguenots, Hussites, Lutherans) to the present.

The monasteries which fell into the hands of Pavelich’s “Independent State of Croatia”, were either demolished or claimed by the Roman Catholics. Among those demolished, were churches erected by ancient Serbian kings (devout men) in Bosnia, Hercegovina, Srem, Dalmatia, Slavonia and Lika. The Croats utilized some of the churches as stables, after they were denuded of their Christian works of art. Everything movable was confiscated from the churches. Men, women and children were slaughtered like sheep, and their churches set afire so that the crimes committed within were concealed by the flames. The Orthodox Church services were forbidden in the “Croatian State”; the Serbs were persecuted because of their religious zeal and national spirit. Ultimately, they were forbidden to call themselves Serbs. Those who survived the massacres were called “Orthodox Croats”, a name introduced for the first time.

PERSECUTIONS BY THE OCCUPYING POWERS

The German occupational forces and its satellites also persecuted the Serbs and their Church. The details of these persecutions were published in the book: *THE MARTYRDOM OF THE SERBS*, published by the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese for the United States of America and Canada. Following the examples set by the Nazis, all the occupying forces persecuted the Serbs and their Church as enemies of the “Tri-power Pact”, and as “sympathizers of the Anglo-Americans”. Their motives were primarily political whereas those of the Croats, displayed a mixture of political and religious fanaticism. The Patriarch Gabriel and the most prominent bishops were arrested and interned, who with the priests were harassed in diverse ways. The Germans justified their actions by stating that the Serbian Orthodox Church was “pro-British”, and that “it inspired the Serbs against the Germans”. In April of 1941, the Germans arrested the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Gabriel (Dozich) and the currently exiled Bishop, Dr. Nikolai (Velimirovich) of Ochrid and Zicha in Serbia, and later confined them in Dachau, from which they were liberated by the American Army in 1945. In addition, the Italians arrested and imprisoned the Orthodox Bishop of Dalmatia, the late Dr. Irinej Georgevich.

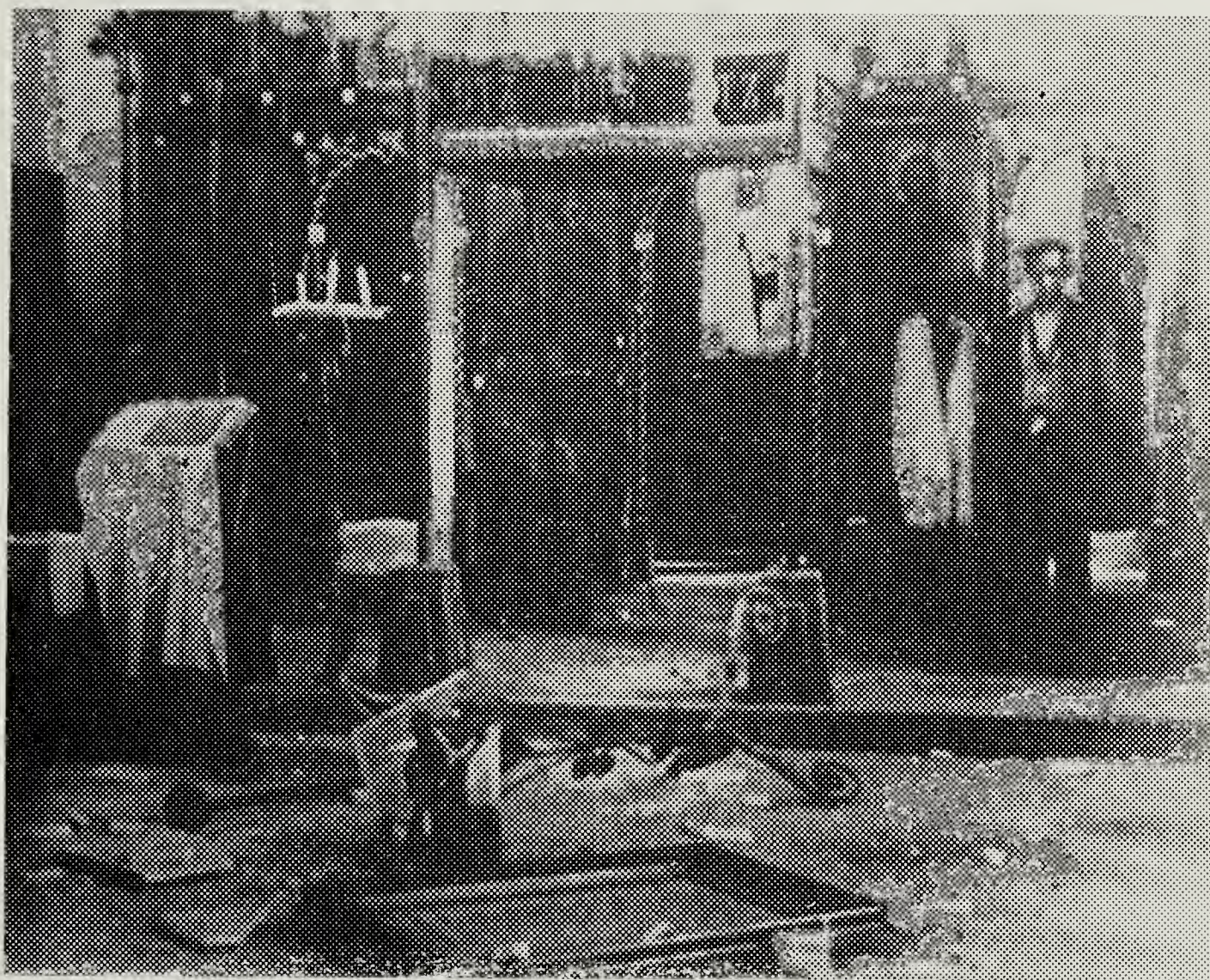
COMMUNIST SLAVERY

The fall of the Fascist-Nazi powers did not bring forth a halt to the persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It has continued and

is existent to this present day. Communism in any form is an enemy of religion, liberty, and dignity of man. Wherever communists rule, there cannot be any freedom of conscience, nor can religious rites be carried on in freedom without fear. Naturally, atheistic authorities cannot permit the free and open propagation of the Christian ethics of love, morality and the freedom of conscience. Christianity and communism are antipodes: Christianity asks its faithful voluntarily to elevate their thoughts until they understand Christ's teachings; communism does not permit any freedom of thought. Civilization has achieved its present level through the contribution of Christianity; where communism has become prevalent, however, civilization has regressed. Whereas Christianity enhances, communism degrades — CONSEQUENTLY THEY CANNOT CO-EXIST!

THE BEGINNING OF COMMUNISTIC CRIMES IN YUGOSLAVIA

The communists of Yugoslavia, following the pattern of their teachers in Moscow, began their "war on God and the Church". When



One of the many Serbian Eastern Orthodox Churches desecrated by the Communists. Similar ruinations were committed by the Croatian Ustashi.

the nationalist forces from Western Yugoslavia withdrew to Slovenia with the Metropolitan of Montenegro, Rt. Reverend Joanikije (Lipovac), the communists seized this high ranking church dignitary and seventy (70) of his priests and annihilated them all. This was the first mass crime committed by the communists; the assassination of the venerable Metropolitan and his clergy who were captured while fleeing toward liberated territories. This was the formal beginning of the religious persecution under the regime of Tito and his atheistic followers. Concurrently, over 100,000 anti-communists were executed. Immediately after the organization of the newly-empowered communists and after their definite establishment by the Soviet Marshall Tolbukin's Army, all the priests who were prominent in the resistance to the Fascist and Nazi occupation, were arrested and executed. On the basis of "he who is not with us, is against us", many nationalists and especially priests, were executed throughout the country. The exact statistics of these political crimes will be established when communism falls and an era of democracy comes to Yugoslavia.

THE ARREST AND SENTENCING OF THE RT. REVEREND BISHOP VARNAVA (NASTICH)

As a result of the murder of the Metropolitan Petar Zimonich, the diocesan post in Bosnia was left vacant. The Holy Episcopal Synod in 1947 elected to the Bishopric of Sarajevo a young professor of theology, American-born Rt. Reverend Bishop Varnava (Nastich). When he, the youngest Bishop in the Serbian Orthodox Church, delivered his first sermon upon assuming his Episcopal Office at Sarajevo, he immediately incurred the disfavor of the communists. He said:

"In my first Archshepherd's sermon, brothers and sisters, I want to direct several words to you, to the Christ loving children of that Church, of which I have become a Bishop today. Arm yourselves, brothers and sisters, with spiritual arms, because Christ's Church wages today in the whole world a terrible war. That war of the Church is not a war for the position of earthly might and power, but it is a war for the salvation of men's souls; the war that may take them out of the darkness and deadly embrace of Satan and return them to the blessed arms of the Heavenly Father. This war isn't of today, nor of yesterday. It is old, as old as mankind. But this war has never been so strong, as in our days, because today wealth and power have scandalized men's soul. Yes, this is a war with the raging spirits of evil, with which the Church is engaged today, and not with any political parties of this

world. Because to Christ's Church it is of little concern what party is going to rule the world, but it is of great concern that Love, Justice and Truth should reign. For until Love, Justice and Truth reign, there will never be peace. I have faith, brothers, in your love toward our Saviour as well as in your faith in God, I am confident that this war will not be lost by you ; but by your enemy, the Devil. But do not forget that you shall win this war only by the weapon of sacrifices. Yea, sacrifices great and small. Do not forget that you are the offspring of the Prince of Kossovo, who sacrificed the earthly to gain the heavenly. Do not forget either that you are the children of a nation that does not possess anything great for which it hasn't paid the price of great sacrifice. And for that reason, if in anyone of you there lives the desire to escape from sacrifice, let that desire change today,—on the Holy day of Christ's Transfiguration,—in the hope that with Evangelical sacrifice comes the Evangelical wreath of victory."

Bishop Varnava was born in Gary, Indiana. He studied theology at the University of Belgrade, and eventually was elevated as a Bishop in 1947. His inclination towards a monastic life was evidenced from his early childhood. He intended to devote his life to the Holy Orthodox Church and the preaching of the truths of Christianity. At his trial, before the communist court at Sarajevo, he was asked by the presiding judge, "Tell us, are you Serbian or American?" To that Bishop Varnava replied, "I am both an American and Serbian at the same time, whether it pleases you or not. But know ye one thing: All the honest Serbs and all the honest Americans are heartily opposed to your dictatorship and tyranny." Bishop Varnava was sentenced to 11 years in prison. As a result of Bishop Varnava's sentencing, the late William Manning, the well known Anglican Bishop of New York, wrote the following:

"This noble and heroic young Bishop has indeed given a wonderful testimony for God, for the Faith and for Human Freedom.

"I wish his example could be made known in this Country and to the whole Christian World.

"We must all pray that he may be upheld and enabled to bear his grievous sufferings for Right and Truth, and that if it be God's will, he may be delivered from the hands of his persecutors.

"May God give him grace and strength in his sufferings for the Faith.

"These are indeed grave days, and I pray that, whatever may come, America may do her part for the upholding of Justice, Liberty and Humanity in this world."

THE IMPRISONMENT OF METROPOLITAN JOSEPH (CVIJOVICH)

Following the death of Patriarch Gabriel in 1950, the Holy Synod convened to elect a new Serbian Patriarch. The most likely candidate to assume office was Metropolitan Joseph (Cvijovich) of Skoplje. The communist authorities, knowing that he would be elected, cognizant of his strong character, and being aware of his heroic stand before the forces of German occupation, ordered his arrest. Metropolitan Joseph was then jailed and Bishop Vikentije (Prodanov) whom the communists had assumed to be weak and easily influenced, was elected to the Patriarchate. In spite of this, the communists did not gain as much with him as they had anticipated.

THE MALTREATMENT OF BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

During a church service at Novi Sad, Bishop Dr. Irinej (Cirich) was severely beaten by a group of communists. He has never fully recovered from this cruel beating even though eight years have elapsed. Bishop Irinej is well known to Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft and many leaders of the World Council of Churches. He represented the Serbian Orthodox Church in the central committee of that body.

In 1953, the Metropolitan of Sarajevo, Dr. Nektarije Krulj, and Dr. Vasilije Kostich, Bishop of Banja Luka, were also brutally attacked by a group of communists. Bishop Nektarije, an aging and sickly man, barely survived this attack in Tuzla, where he was convalescing. Bishop Vasilije was attacked by an infuriated mob and then put on a train enroute to Belgrade. Both of these bishops were in fact deprived of their diocesan posts. Metropolitan Krulj has not completely recovered from the beating and wounds inflicted upon him in Tuzla. Bishop Vasilije, a younger man, recovered sooner. When bishops are so mistreated, it is easy to imagine how the communists treat the priests. According to a recent interview with the press by Bishop Dionisije, he stated: "Hundreds of Serbian Orthodox priests were arrested and sentenced to forced labor or to prison."

The communists won over a group of priests for cooperation with the authorities. This group is carrying on a propaganda campaign among their colleagues in an effort to persuade them to cooperate and eventually to forsake the Holy Synod. The priests who refuse to join the philo-communist association of priest's are usually maltreated by diverse means or arrested. Such priests are denied food and welfare as provided

by the state. Those are the real martyrs for the Faith, as could only exist under the rule of soulless and Godless communism.

Propagation of atheism is a requirement in the schools in the state of Yugoslavia. Atheism is openly propagated at all open gatherings and assemblies as well as in the press. Meanwhile, all religious education is strictly forbidden. It is forbidden for the students and pupils, along with their tutors or teachers, to attend church services. Those who transgress the commands and prescripts of the communist authorities generally suffer the consequences of disobedience. If the tutors or teachers are the transgressors, they are deprived of their position. If they be students, they are expelled from school. The communist newspapers are full of news items concerning the punishment of teachers and their pupils who attend church and adhere to religious customs. The communist regime in Yugoslavia as in Soviet Russia, declared "war on God and the Church". Consequently, the younger generation is adapting to life without a knowledge of Christian faith and morals. If conditions of these sort prevails much longer in the State, the future of the younger generation will consist of an education devoid of the basic conceptions of the Christian teachings, and ideals. The only Christian knowledge that will be maintained and preserved by the youth concerning their church is that which is passed to them orally by their parents, in which they themselves are not too well versed.

Many conquerors have destroyed the body, but the communists try to destroy the soul. This is the reason which motivates the communists to forbid the opening of schools and seminaries in which future priests would be trained.

INTERFERING IN THE CONDUCTIONS OF CHURCH SERVICES

In the larger cities, church services are rarely conducted. Only marriages, baptism of children, cutting of the church bread in commemoration of their patron saint and the reading of the patron prayers are practiced freely. True, even in the larger cities, danger exists for the faithful because of communist-informers. These who are reported by the "informers" (spies), are deprived of their ration cards from which they purchase from the state-owned store-houses. When it is known that private enterprise does not exist, it is easy to understand the value of the ration card.

In the smaller cities and villages, the communist authorities prohibit the citizens from attending church and even prohibit the clergy-

men from conducting church services. In a great many of the churches that still exist, the sacraments of Matrimony and Baptism are performed by the priest in utmost secrecy.

FORBIDDING THE RECONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION OF CHURCHES THAT WERE DESTROYED

An enormous number of Orthodox churches were destroyed in the war, particularly in the areas of Yugoslavia which fell under the jurisdiction of the so-called "Independent state of Croatia". The communists have not permitted the people to re-establish or re-construct the demolished churches. Since the war, very few of these demolished Serbian Orthodox Churches have been renovated. The churches which escaped ruination, the communists sealed with boards to deny entrance to the faithful. In many remote sections of Yugoslavia, there is hardly a single church in which regular services are conducted. For example, in the small district of Gatackom in Hercegovina, all 13 churches are boarded up and sealed. This is generally the case in all parishes where priests will not enter the pro-communist Clergymen's Association, which openly propagates collaboration with the communists. In these parishes, the priests cannot, during the day, enter the village at all, let alone attempt to open the churches to conduct priestly duties. The churches which the communistic authorities show the alien visitors and guests in Belgrade, especially to representatives of alien churches, epitomize "Potemkin's villages". Showing them these churches in Belgrade, overcrowded with people, is a standard way of deceiving the visitors that freedom of religious worship is permitted. In reality, the Orthodox faith is still persecuted and all those who encourage the opposition to this communistic policy are severely reprimanded.

WHAT IS HOPED TO BE GAINED BY THE COMMUNIST'S PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AND ITS BISHOPS?

The communists are striving to form an international faith from the teachings of Karl Marx, and until they destroy the Christian Church, they will not attain their goal! That is why they are pressuring the priests and bishops to forsake the defense of their faith and their fold. Thus the pressure and persecution exists upon the bishops and the Holy Synod, to recognize the apostate Clergymen's Association. But that is still not sufficient. The communists are trying to coerce the bishops and the Holy Synod to create divisions in the Serbian Orthodox Church. They have continually pressured the Holy Synod to recognize the newly established "Independent Macedonian Orthodox Church". They are

pressuring the Holy Synod to grant the Church in Montenegro its autonomy, which it does not seek. All these requests by the communists have been rejected by the Holy Synod, for it is known that only through the destruction of the unity of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia can the communists over-power and rule the cut-off fragments for their own purpose by arraying one against the other by intrigue. The communists depend on personal jealousy and personal ambitions to break the unity and spirit of the Serbian Church and its people. We ought to render thanks to God and the solidarity of the Holy Synod, that the communists have not succeeded to this day. They have (1.) pressured the economic income of the church (2.) forbidden clergymen to perform their sacred functions, (3.) forbidden bishops to fulfill their episcopal office by depriving them of regular visitations in their Dioceses, (4.) and assaulted and attacked the bishops continually. They did not subjugate the Holy Synod, nor the Patriarch Vikentije. Up to now they have defended their souls and sacrificed their bodies. This is the explanation for the assaults on the bishops and their subsequent sentencing to prison. It is that goal for which the communists are working—to break down the Orthodox pillars of defense.

ARREST AND SENTENCING OF METROPOLITAN ARSENIUS

The most recent outburst of communist rage against Christianity is connected with the case of the Metropolitan of Montenegro—Arsenius. Metropolitan Arsenius (Bradvarevich) of Cetinje, Montenegro, the Vice-president of the Holy Synod, was arrested in the earlier part of July 1954 and sentenced shortly afterward to 11 years and six months at hard labor. This silent, but determined, Serbian prelate paid for his resistance against communism with his freedom.

Metropolitan Arsenius was born in September 24, 1883. He was consecrated to the bishopric, February 4, 1940, for the Diocese of Moravickog. He is distinguished as a good orator. In the beginning of World War I, he was arrested by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. After the war, he became a member of the People's Congregation in Novi Sad, which voted on the annexation of Vojvodina to Serbia.

After his consecration to the bishopric, he delivered a sermon in which he, as a faithful proclaimer of the teaching of Christ, especially emphasizes Christ's words, which are recorded in the Gospel of the Evangelist, Saint Mark: "But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant to all. For even the Son of

Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life for a ransom for many." (Mark : Chap. 10, Verses : 43, 44, 45).

His humility and his faithfulness to the teaching of Christ were notable. Arsenius was always humble and he remained faithful to the Lord. He was a teacher all of his life, particularly since his accession to the bishopric of Montenegro.

Without ostentation or fear, he defended the unity of the Serbian Church and the purity of the church's teachings. Because of this he was sentenced to more than 11 years at hard labor. So fell one of the pillars of Orthodoxy and Christianity. The judge, with orders from his communistic superiors, condemned the aged Metropolitan under false charges that he labored actively for the over-throw of the regime. He refused to conform to the doctrines of Karl Marx, or to honor the executive authorities patterned after Lenin and Stalin. He preached love and brotherhood among men, and at no time did he advocate hatred or force. He truly could not condone the communistic endeavor of destroying the body and subsequently destroying the soul. So the presiding judge sentenced this venerable old prelate to prison.

COMMENTS OF THE TRIAL OF METROPOLITAN ARSENIUS

The newspapers in England, France and America registered their condemnation of this judicial crime. All commentators denounced the Tito (Josip Broz) regime. The Serbian newspapers and periodicals condemned this unjustifiable act against one of the oldest prelates of the Orthodox Serbian Church. As evidence, we cite specific protests and commentaries : In a special report from Minneapolis, Minn., to the New York Times, dated August 12th, 1954, said :

ANGLICAN ASSAILS YUGOSLAV ACTION

Primate of England Calls Jailing Orthodox Bishop Uncivilized Behavior

By GEORGE DUGAN

Special to The New York Times

MINNEAPOLIS, Aug. 11—The top prelate of the Church of England charged the Government of Yugoslavia today with paying "lip service" to freedom on the one hand and violating it on the other

In an address before the Minnesota branch of the English Speaking Union, the Most Rev. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England, cited the recent arrest of the

Serbian Orthodox Bishop Arsenije as an example of "irresponsibility" in a nation "still on this side of the Iron Curtain."

Bishop Arsenije was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment for opposition to the Government.

According to the Archbishop, "that in itself was no crime in a free society." The prelate added that there was nothing in the churchman's trial to show that he had been indulging in criminal activities, "though no doubt he little approved of the Communist principles of the present Government."

Some Praise for Yugoslavia

The Archbishop lauded Yugoslavia for her "anxiety" in the past to preserve the principles of religious freedom, but expressed deep dismay at the arrest of a "respected and venerable" leader of the Orthodox faith.

"It is indeed distressing," he declared, "that once more this all-too-familiar story should be unfolded. A Bishop arrested, sentenced on no objective evidence and imprisoned in order to intimidate the church and keep it in complete subservience to the state.

"This is not the behavior of a civilized state and does a great disservice to freedom. Christians have been deeply shocked by this trial and sentence, and that is felt especially by Anglicans, who enjoy such close fellowship with the Orthodox churches."

The heads of the three largest Serbian-American organizations: the Diocese of the United States of America and Canada, Serbian National Federation and the Serbian National Defense, forwarded to President Eisenhower and the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles the following telegram:

The arrest of the Metropolitan Arsenius of Cetinje, Vice-president of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church, confirms the fact that freedom of religion—as well as other freedoms of men—do not exist in communist Yugoslavia.

We appeal to You, Mr. President, to take interest in the fate of the arrested Serbian Metropolitan and the continued persecution of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church. This persecution together with other violations of men's freedom, strengthens our affirmation that help to Tito's regime endangers the very existence of the Serbian people who have always been faithful friends and allies of the United States.

The policy of helping Tito and his communist conspirators who basely and stealthily infiltrate the West for the benefit of Moscow,

promotes the great communist offensive against the free nations of the world.

RT. REV. BISHOP DIONISIJE
Bishop of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox
Diocese for the United States of
America and Canada

MILE RADA KOVICH
President
of the Serbian National Federation

MIHAILO M. DUCHICH
President
of the Serbian National Defense

The president of the Serbian Central National Committee and the former Yugoslav Ambassador to the United States Mr. Constantine A. Fotich, together with Mr. Milan Gavrilovich, President of the Agrarian Party in Yugoslavia, former member of the government, forwarded to President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles the following petition which says in part:

..“This accusation is the product of the constant fear of the regime for its very existence and that the court therefore indicted the Metropolitan for conspiracy against Tito’s life

The hostility of the overwhelming majority of the people in Yugoslavia against the communist regime has been greatly increased by this trial. The heavy sentence which amounts practically to a death penalty for the 72 year old Metropolitan Arsenije has made of him a religious and national martyr. The deep silence in which the reading of the sentence was received by the audience serves as evidence of the feelings of the people towards Tito’s regime.

Metropolitan Arsenije is the vice-president of the Holy Synod, the highest governing body of the Serbian Orthodox Church, to which more than half of the population of Yugoslavia belongs. In spite of the relentless war which the regime is pursuing against all religious denominations in Yugoslavia even the official statistics of Tito’s government show that 48.6% of the population has declared its religious allegiance. Even among the remaining 13.4% there are many more belonging to a church who have listed as religionless from fear of losing their jobs or from reprisals by the authorities. The condemnation of Metropolitan Arsenije has undoubtedly fortified the people in their allegiance to their faith

The trial and condemnation of Metropolitan Arsenije is new evidence of the opposition of the overwhelming majority of the people

of Yugoslavia against Tito's dictatorial regime which maintains itself in power only by brute force. This regime has waged a war against the people in political, cultural, economic and religious fields and has failed in these aspects. It has tried to curb the resistance of the people by depriving them of all political, economic and personal freedoms. It has suffered defeat in every respect and the people remain opposed to it as ever before

The United States, animated by the best intentions, has made great efforts and sacrifices to help the peoples of Yugoslavia in order to strengthen the anti-Soviet bloc in case of an armed conflict between the free world and the Soviets, relying on its army and its fighting abilities. But the value of an army cannot be measured in terms of numbers of divisions alone, but also by its morale and spiritual force, qualifies the importance of which no one else has better stressed than you yourself, Mr. President. By their resistance beyond any doubt their unyielding opposition to the imposed dictatorship. It is therefore hardly conceivable that in case of war they will rally and fight under communist leadership. The Serbs have shown in the past what sacrifices they are prepared to suffer when they are called to defend their freedom and independence. If tomorrow they are called to fight under a communist dictator they will feel that they are asked not to fight for their freedom and independence but for the defense and preservation of a regime they abhor.

Under these conditions we respectfully ask if the time has not come for the United States to reappraise its policy of support and assistance to Tito. It is only thanks to this assistance that Tito has been able to survive despite the moral, political and economical disintegration of his regime. Once this assistance is withdrawn, the peoples of Yugoslavia will find the necessary strength to solve their own political problems before Moscow steps in to impose a solution to its own advantage, at an appropriate time."

To the above, we must add the petitions, protests and wire appeals by various Serbian organizations throughout the land. Among the most prominent is a resolution by the Serbian National Federation from which we partially quote:

WHEREAS the Serb National Federation is the largest representative organization of American Serbs in the United States of America and,

WHEREAS the government of Yugoslavia has been usurped by one of the arch communists of the world and,

WHEREAS freedom of religion and all other freedoms known to the free world have been forcibly extorted from the citizens of Yugoslavia and,

WHEREAS the communist government of Yugoslavia is dedicated to the destruction of this small but indomitable force on the side of the free world and,

WHEREAS recently the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan Arsenije Bradvarevic was arrested on the trumped-up charges of having committed acts against the state of Yugoslavia and to have engendered racial and religious hatred and,

WHEREAS the imprisonment and sentencing of the Orthodox Metropolitan Arsenije Bradvarevic was a typical result of the speediest injustice of a communist government and,

WHEREAS aid to Marshall Tito is in direct conflict with the noble principles and tenets as extolled by the free world and the United States of America in particular.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That this government through the medium of its State Department exert every influence within its power upon Marshall Tito to acquire the freedom of this great leader of the Orthodox Church, who dared to preach his religion to his people in his own way. And that if this cannot be achieved, then this government should cease and desist from rendering any further aid to the communist government of Marshall Tito which has consecrated all of its efforts to the crushing of religion and all other freedoms and is ultimately and inevitably with American help extirpating the only flames of freedom left in Yugoslavia and thereby dealing a crushing blow to the causes, aims, and purposes of the free world.

SERB NATIONAL FEDERATION

Mile Radakovich, President

Protests were also sent by almost all Serbian national and religious organizations in America. The Rt. Reverend Bishop Dionisije, released to the press a memorandum concerning the persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church which states:

“The usual communistic accusation against everyone is labeled anti-state propaganda, as was the case of the aged Metropolitan Arsenije. He did not conduct any anti-state propaganda if he asked to establish some religious church rights of which the church is deprived, and if he was sympathetic toward the United States of America and her President.”

“The World Council of Churches has invited the Serbian Patriarchate of Yugoslavia to send delegates, but the Serbian church in these circumstances probably was forbidden to send any delegates.”

CONCLUSION

The great second gathering of the World Council of Churches, among them the Eastern Orthodox Church, is endeavoring to bring about a new unity of all Christendom. That is a worthy and blessed effort. The communist force of evil have gained control over one-third of mankind. In our noble goal of uniting churches and mankind around a faith of God through the teachings of Christ, we must not forget that one cannot unite unto one whole, both free man who believe in God, and those who suffer in bondage to atheistic powers. Only free men and free church should be united. That is why those who are free should liberate their brethern in Christ. Christian love and charity should inspire them in the moral struggle for the liberation of the enslaved. Therefore, delegates at the Second World Assembly in Evanston, Illinois, should remember the enslaved. Being inspired by Christian love, they should adopt resolutions and messages that will initiate a positive movement for their liberation. May the world's churches unite in their belief in God for a supreme effort against the evil which threatens morality, freedom, and the Faiths of the world.

The nations of the earth are now looking to Evanston with expectation. The free nations expect to see the blessed unity of Christ's Churches; the tormented and persecuted Christians expect liberation from their atheistic enemies. For, what has Christ with the anti-Christ, and the Church of God with the enemies of God?

POST SCRIPT

While this brochure was in print, we received a copy of the letter by Mr. William H. Smyth sent to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Visser 't Hooft and to the three presidents of the World Council of Churches Second Assembly in Evanston, i. e. His Eminence the Archbishop of Cantenbury, Geoffrey Francis Fisher, His Grace the Greek Archbishop of Western Europe, and the Right Reverend Bishop Oxnam of the Methodist Church in the United States, and also to the six newly-elected presidents: Rt. Reverend John Baillie, Church of Scotland, Metropolitan J. Mar Thoma, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Bishop F. F. Otto Dibelius, Evangelical Church, Germany, Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, Protestant Episcopal Church, Archbishop Michael, Greek Orthodox Church, Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, Methodist Central Conference.

In his letter to the above mentioned illustrious churchmen, he pleaded the case of Metropolitan Arsenius of Montenegro, declaring him not guilty, and requested them to use their influence with their respective governments, that this innocent and great servant of Christ be freed.

We certainly hope that the addressess will heed Mr. Smyth's plea.

The full text of Mr. Smyth's letter will be published at the later date.

*

Mr. Smyth is the son of a well known Methodist missionary in China, the late George Smyth († - 1911), who was the president of an Anglo-Chinese college from 1882—1899, and later the assistant secretary of the Methodist Board of Missions. Mr. William H. Smyth, who lived in Yugoslavia for twenty years and is an expert on Yugoslav affairs, testified before the Senate of the United States in behalf of the Serb refugees in Germany, to bring forth the truth about Yugoslavia and Tito.

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